

Banquet Speech

Haldan K. Hartline's speech at the Nobel Banquet in Stockholm, December 10, 1967

Your Majesty, Your Royal Highnesses, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I wish I could adequately express my feelings of pleasure and deep gratitude for this great honor that has come to me. But of course this is impossible - one cannot convey one's personal feelings on such an occasion as this. One works in one's laboratory - one's chaotic laboratory - with students and colleagues, doing what one most wants to do - then all this happens! It is overwhelming.

There are two thoughts that give me special satisfaction in receiving this award. One is that we stand - my two confreres and I - in some degree as representatives of a great number of fellow workers over the entire world, who are enthusiastically active in this field of ours. Judging by the sincerity and warmth of the letters that have poured in from so many of them, they consider that the entire field has received recognition - this field of work that I was so fortunate to enter at an early stage, following the trail blazed by [Adrian](#) and his colleagues.

My second source of satisfaction is that this recognition is for contributions to basic understanding: understanding of primary visual processes. Alfred Nobel was much concerned, as are we all, with the tangible benefits we hope for and expect from physiological and medical research, and the Faculty of the Caroline Institute has ever been alert to recognize practical benefits. But in its wisdom the Faculty knows that practical benefits flow most freely when there is solid understanding of fundamentals. That knowledge gives us keen satisfaction. But what is more, if we have succeeded in adding to the basic understanding of our universe and ourselves, we will have made a contribution to the totality of human culture. Scientists care deeply about their place in that culture, and their contribution to it.

I am no linguist and know only two Swedish phrases - the first is but a single word, internationally understood, and used wherever glasses are raised; the second I will use now: Tack så mycket.

From [Les Prix Nobel en 1967](#), Editor Ragnar Granit, [Nobel Foundation], Stockholm, 1968